# Education and Everyday Life: An Argument Against "Educational Futures"[1]

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This essay is a critique of educational futures as proposed by educators, members of the business community, and others. I examine the themes of several recent documents from provincial and national levels of government, and argue that speculations about the future found in these sources serve the interests of dominant sectors of Canadian society at the expense of the student and general populations. I propose and explain a set of categories of everyday life as an alternative focus for discussion of education in the future.

Cet essai est une critique des voies d'avenir de l'éducation tels qu'ils sont proposés, entre autres, par des enseignants et des gens d'affaires. L'auteur analyse les thèmes de plusieurs documents publiés récemment par les gouvernements fédéral et provinciaux, et soutient que les spéculations au sujet de l'avenir de l'éducation que l'on trouve dans ces sources servent les intérêts des secteurs dominants de la société canadienne au détriment des élèves et du grand public. Il propose, pour discuter de l'éducation dans l'avenir, d'autres approches axées sur une série de catégories tirées de la vie quotidienne.

During the past decade, educational and economic policy makers have increasingly traced changes in technology and economic restructuring, and the probable effects of these on the future work force. Much of their attention has focused on students' transition from school to work, including consideration of some obvious constraints on an efficient passage: declining education standards, the high drop-out rate, and expressed doubt that schooling can equip young people for the world outside the classroom. Among other things, this has spawned considerable talk about "educational futures," much of which reflects an obsession with prediction while exhibiting tacit agreement that the future cannot be mapped definitively. The futures industry has produced an almost perpetual stream of additions to the curriculum, programs defined by the buzz-word of the day, and "new" educational goals that are frequently restated abstractions of yesterday's unrealized aims. Such changes in the curriculum often require teachers to educate for — largely speculative — economic and social conditions.

Educational policy discussions of this character have come to the public domain along with new approaches to work organization (see Kanter, 1990). Future-oriented programs in work and education have as their empirical rationale the globalization of the economy and the intensity of technological change moving us into a "post-industrial society."

This article is an argument against the concept of "educational futures" as formulated by government bureaucrats, corporate leaders, educators, and others, in a number of representative pre-policy discussion papers issued for public consumption. My critique is limited to documents from four provices and a national statement on these issues from the Economic Council of Canada.[2] I explore the concept of the future used in these documents, and demonstrate where futurists' concerns with schooling and socialization are misled and misleading. My purpose is to draw attention to the way these documents address the needs of state and business interests while appropriating the futures of subordinate sectors of society.

Depending on one's point of view, the future of education has different priorities. For futurists, the virtually uncontrollable trends of technical change and economic restructuring seem to dictate the urgency with which it is considered. Alternatively, the focus on the future ought to be governed by recognition that we are dealing with the futures of persons as agents of economies. The tension between priorities can be illuminated by understanding that the discourse and planning for educational futures is a *bourgeois* critique of everyday life. In the contemporary world, dominated by technologies that drive the creation of new, often artificial needs, the critique of everyday life has emerged from the class and cultural interests behind technological advances. In this regard, Henri Lefebvre (1991) argued that,

> Far from suppressing criticism of everyday life, modern technical progress *realizes* it. This technicity replaces the criticism of life through dreams, or ideas, or poetry, or those activities which rise above the everyday, by the critique of everyday life from within. . . . (p. 9)

The rapidity of technological innovation and the managed obsolescence of products, values, and styles of life constitute the substance and direction of this critique, and led Lefebvre to conclude that the modernization process in capitalist societies brought about "new conflicts and new contradictions in what is new," because "the new is (more or less) everywhere" (p. 66). Similarly, the introduction of work re-organization schemes and changes in the curricula are part of a bourgeois critique of everyday life; they confirm that human needs historically derived from life in capitalist social systems will be more difficult to satisfy.

Virtually all educational futurist arguments operate at the social structural or institutional level, promoting a set of "needs" socially constructed to serve the production of knowledge useful to dominant sectors of society: corporate interests and the state. These needs are, in short, a positive attitude toward a disjointed work life, increased frequency in retraining and unemployment, and diminished expectations of a secure future.

The alternative view, which is the basis for critical knowledge of everyday life, is that acceptance of or adaptation to these needs has a detrimental effect on

"natural" or "necessary" needs. These are the conditions for maintenance and reproduction of life (Heller, 1974, pp. 29–34; Marx & Engels, 1970, pp. 42–48, 132–133), but in our contemporary context include the need for a broad-based critical knowledge, especially as it pertains to such categories of everyday life as the control of labour processes, generational continuity of knowledge, security of labour and of life, and the struggle against alienation. I take these categories of need to be fundamental and *familiar* categories of everyday life. They constitute the ordinary terrain on which social roles and relations are carried out. *Familiarity* is a context in which persons come to know and reason about everyday life, "a firm position from which we 'proceed' . . . and to which we return in due course" (Heller, 1984, p. 239). As a "cultural . . . or ethical element" of everyday life (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 15) the familiar is a need. The bourgeois critique of everyday life that exists within educational futures undermines this familiarity as a validation of lived experience.[3]

The heart of the problem is the difficult connection between the future and everyday life. During the Great Depression, Robert S. Lynd argued for a cultural understanding of the future that has retained its significance. Much of what he referred to as the "tilt into the future" has become institutionalized, creating ever-renewed efforts to work to achieve a place in the future and working equally hard to postpone it (Lynd, 1939/1964, pp. 88–90). As Lynd saw it, our culture has "harness[ed] the present instrumentally to the future" (p. 90), undermining the desire for creativity and spontaneity. Similarly, Lefebvre (1991) states that "everyday life reveals the forces which work for and against" human progress (p. 189). In a society able to produce an oversupply of artificial needs, it has been possible, in everyday life, "to erect the *immediate* as a barrier to wider and more far-reaching ways of seeing" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 189). The future, then, is a component of everyday life requiring critical appraisal.

## THE "FUTURE" IN EDUCATIONAL DISCOURSE

David Livingstone has surveyed popular and intellectual conceptions of the future and suggests that among the latter there are two camps—those who "set out more morally-explicit images of preferred futures" and those who engage in "'value-free' technological forecasting" (1983, p. 181). The second group concerns me here. Typical technological forecasters argue that the future will consist of an increasingly interdependent and knowledge-based economy, an increase in technological and educational levels, and a more humane and leisure-oriented culture. Their conception of the future is derived in this way:

> To the technological forecaster . . . creating the social future apparently means discovering trends and then using further technical ingenuity to either mute or facilitate them. However sophisticated they become, such approaches are based on a presumption that the future really depends on forces that are beyond human capacity to control in any signifi-

cant way. The enduring image of the future left by all such writings is one of irreversible technocratic trends remote from whatever social and political capacities ordinary people might retain. (Livingstone, 1983, p. 181)

There is considerable pessimism about the accuracy of such forecasting. Etzioni and Jargowsky (1990) have shown that claims of a transition to a "post-industrial" society are often exaggerated, and Johnston (1993) has argued that the more important shift is ideological.[4]

In the discourse of technological forecasters, found in educational futures documents, the concept of the future is awash with contradictions. Harold Shane's *Education for a New Millennium* (1981) is a collection of the thought, expectation, and planning from a large body of academics around the globe. Among Shane's conclusions, based on his respondents' expectations of the future, is that ending the continuing inequality in social benefits and managing the resulting social instability will require much social energy. The Saskatchewan discussion paper *Toward the Year 2000* uses the data from Shane's 132 subjects to impress upon its readers that the world of tomorrow will be a place of conflict and want (Saskatchewan Department of Education, 1985, pp. 10–11). Elsewhere the future is variously defined but each explanation retains a similar contradiction — that the future is at once created by "us" and at the same time shaped by the demands of and on technology.

The key to knowing the future is that its essence is *change*. Knowing how change occurs and how it can be facilitated through an inclusive type of planning is essential, for "[r]eal change does not occur without the support of those effected [sic] by the change" (Saskatchewan Department of Education, 1985, p. 30; see also Ontario Ministry of Education, 1984, pp. v-vi). The planning in educational futures documents, however, is often directed less to realistic social planning than to individual adaptation to the autonomy of technological change. As such, the future is approached as a set of ambivalent circumstances leading persons to experiences of uncertainty. In the context of education, "knowing change" does not imply a more secure knowledge of everyday life. The parameters of learning appear quite narrow and easily blur into "adjustment."

To deal with these changes and potential problems, the Ontario document looks back at the stability of the "old system" Egerton Ryerson built in the nineteenth century (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1984, p. 20). The British Columbia document (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 1992) centres its proposals on the creation of a "learning culture," whereas the authors of the New Brunswick document see the need to strengthen relations among many social components — formal and informal education, public schooling and private enterprise — to "build not just a system of education but a culture . . . rooted firmly in the values of society . . . economic to be sure, but civic and personal as well" (New Brunswick Commission on Excellence in Education, 1991, p. 5).

Another promoted means of solving problems of the future is *individuality*, a concept these documents' authors confuse with the more ideological concept, individualism. All the documents in question assert that critical thinking, problem solving, citizenship and values education, and gender relations, among a multitude of other current program titles, are crucial for the individual to *learn* his or her place in the future. These documents demonstrate an increased sensitivity to the subjective and stress the development of the person. The individual must learn, however, that this new attention comes with the traditional political and cultural demands of citizenship. John Harker (1992) has discussed the contradictory way the British Columbia document addresses "individuality." There will be, he writes, "encouragement of [students'] critical thinking, creativity and flexibility," but the individual will be "constantly subordinated to the need to maintain social stability and economic prosperity" (p. 4). Harker goes on to suggest that the individual will be fulfilled, according to this document, when he or she works toward "the societal and economic expectations *held for them* [italics added]" (p. 4). The professed interdependence in society is limited to each individual conforming to the demands of social structural forces on which he or she simultaneously depends for survival.

Other facts of change setting the stage for consequential or correspondent problems are the "explosion of knowledge," a greater ethnic mix in North America, and shifts in gender roles and in the demography of Canadian society (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 1992, p. 2; Ontario Ministry of Education, 1984, pp. 13–18). The "increased need for learning," for example, will be conditioned by, among other things, "the shrinkage of financial resources," a "poor fit between education and employment," the personal transformations brought on by technological change, and the dovetailing of education and training which will necessarily constrain education (Economic Council of Canada [ECC], 1992; New Brunswick Commission on Excellence in Education, 1991, pp. 7, 12; Ontario Ministry of Education, 1984, pp. 7–8; Saskatchewan Department of Education, 1985, pp. 9–10).

The authors of these future-perspectives tend to play both sides of the issue — prediction and planning on the one hand, problems and uncertainties on the other. Accentuating this contradiction, these documents heighten the tension in the way young people may plan for the future. For example, in their focus on the subjective factors of education and the world of the future, the authors of the Saskatchewan document are compelled to state that schooling must teach new skills to "prepare students for the new and unpredictable"; that is, "personal problems, family problems, job-related problems, and other types of conflict" (Saskatchewan Department of Education, 1985, pp. 17–18).[5]

The theme of a connection between education and work is readily apparent in these documents. The ECC has introduced a concept to explain this new condition: *coherence* between education and the labour market. This will be the most

effective strategy to ensure that labour-market demands are anticipated in the education, training, and apprenticeship of youth.

> Coherence has two dimensions in the present context: 1) the transmission by employers of signals about skill needs and about the preparation of graduates of the education system; and 2) the accurate reading of those signals by students, parents, and learning institutions — and, most particularly, their response to those signals. (ECC, 1992, p. 3)

It has become a common theme in business-education dialogues that the corporate sector wants greater input into the creation of a locally produced work force. Some level of collaboration between schools and industries is unquestionably useful in certain circumstances.[6] But suggestions like the one from Telecom Canada's president that such collaboration will virtually eliminate workplace drudgery and provide workers with "more influence with regard to the content of their jobs and how their organizations are managed" are misleading (Farrell, 1990, p. 17). This is especially true when educators and businessmen predicate their collaborative efforts on the need to define "sustainable economic strategies based on job and wealth creation" (Greenleaf, 1993, p. 20). Too often such priorities translate into instrumental decisions about production methods and the training and recruitment of a labour force.

One example of work re-organization relevant to the concept of coherence is the "flexible firm." It is coherent not only with proposed educational changes but with the conceptual framework and rationale of futurist contentions. The flexible firm is characterized by three forms of flexibility: functional, allowing for a quick shift of workers between various jobs; numerical, a timely increase or decrease in labour force numbers; and financial, a system of remuneration facilitating the first two forms of flexibility. Although this strategy is a response to "new market realities," it is also a critique of the existing labour force as having inappropriate skills, or as being a constraint on management because it is organized and therefore inflexible. Instead, those who affirm the new realities of the market promote a cheaper, precisely trained work force that can be expanded, trimmed, or jettisoned on short notice: flexible specialization.

> [E]mployers have recognised that the current state of the labour market, with high unemployment, few shortages of labour, and a weakened trade union movement, will help them secure these aims. So, there are both strong pressures to achieve a more flexible workforce and greater opportunities to do so now than in the past. (Atkinson, 1984, p. 28)

This means that workers will require not only multiple skills for the continuously changing workplace, but also an affirmative attitude toward redundancy claimed to be inherent to change and toward retraining that is coherent with change.

These are the major themes and speculations in the complex of education, work, and the future. As it stands, this discourse does little more than lend itself,

as Livingstone and Harker have suggested, to the increased powerlessness of people, and a continuation of the contest between the individual and society. If educational futures claim a necessary interdependence with social components outside of schooling, such as the organization of production, then it should be argued with equal force that an adequate analysis of educational futures depends on a social theory in which education, work, and society share the same kind of interdependence.

## SHIFTING THE FOCUS: A RETURN TO FUNDAMENTAL SOCIAL CATEGORIES

The discussion of educational futures not only contains a critique of existing conditions, but proposes new work and educational patterns that will become the foundation for social relations. A critical knowledge of everyday life must respond to these proposed patterns by initially restating the premise that the individual is an expression of society's totality of forces and relations. Heller (1984) begins with: "If individuals are to reproduce society, they must reproduce themselves as individuals. We may define 'everyday life' as the aggregate of those individual reproductive factors which . . . make social reproduction possible" (p. 3). Additionally, it is imperative that the corporate agenda of educational futures, which takes change and uncertainty as a positive, be interrogated by a series of questions about how everyday life is sustained and reproduced, what social forces alter familiar terrain, and to what extent everyday life can be changed before necessary needs of persons, as defined by Heller (1974, p. 33), are undermined. Thus, an oppositional critique necessarily operates at three levels. First, it must reveal educational futures as an attack on the existing content of everyday life. Second, there must be an attempt to "protect" certain moral and cultural elements that have become "an organic part of the 'normal' life of people belonging to a particular class in a given society" (Heller, 1974, p. 33). Finally, such a critique must go beyond what is customary and establish a new basis of existence that is in the interests of this, the working class. In this article I can only begin such a critique on the first two levels.

Thus, we need to examine fundamental categories of social relations, delineating the territory of expectation for most persons about to make the transition from school to work. Except for the category of alienation, the categories dealt with here — work, knowledge, time, and generational succession — are all taken-for-granted categories along which persons progress through established patterns of living. But, as argued to this point, educational futures discourse actively displaces the familiar in favour of other courses of expectation and behaviour. Space does not permit a thorough historical analysis, but without difficulty one could demonstrate that much social disorder and reform has arisen because of conflict over work practices, the control of knowledge, the division of time between work and leisure, and issues of social and personal security.[7]

*Work and Knowledge*

The Economic Council of Canada (1992) states that the student population to which their proposals are directed is the 70% who are not normally expected to go on to post-secondary education (pp. 47, 52). This is the same figure used by Arthur Wirth in his *Education and Work for the Year 2000* (1991), a futurist proposal for American education. Although technological and other changes will affect the entire population, it is apparent to educational futurists that the most serious impact will be felt by those in the industrial and service sectors. This is also the group whose rising expectations will more likely end in frustration (Shane, 1981, p. 26). Thus, those who claim to know the impact of future change have aimed their discussions at the mass of less educated and less skilled working people to be specifically displaced by the so-called post-industrial age.

Within different historical and social contexts, work and knowledge are necessary as well as socially constructed needs of persons, organized to assist in the achievement of economic and community goals. Production, learning, and doing work is a matter of acquiring the skills necessary for participating in the social production process essential for developing human talents and capabilities via the "conscious direction of physical and mental resources," (Heller, 1984, p. 66). Work, and the knowledge on which it is sustained, is, for Lefebvre (1991), "the foremost need" because it can lead to knowledge of the social system as a dialectical whole, as well as free the worker from social constraints and provide conditions for him or her to master necessity (p. 39).

Educational futurists allow that functional literacy will remain a basic requirement of schooling for employment; they also promote values education and the arts as components of a future curriculum, and introduce such new programs as gender equity and ecology. These are tangential, however, to the main focus on education as a response to labour-market demands. This is, in effect, a critique of the necessity for working people to possess and/or control knowledge as nothing more than an instrumental requirement to acquire paid work. Critical, even quasi-autonomous, knowledge is not an issue in these documents; it has been replaced by *attitudes,* and *learning* as means of adjustment to change and becoming an economically viable person. Adopting an affirmative attitude and learning fragmentary roles in production or service are key needs of the labour market that schools can satisfy. Continuous technological change does not require knowledge of a holistic and genuinely critical character but rather an attitude to learning that produces and accommodates temporary and adaptable skills. Because education and the economic market increasingly operate from the same models (McMurtry, 1991, pp. 211–212), it is not surprising that market power determines the content of learning and personal adaptability. The success of vocational education — in fact, its very relevance to the future — depends on the capacity of training systems to respond to a changing economic and technical

environment. But what skills will be needed in the "rapidly evolving industrial world"? The Economic Council of Canada (1992) answers that the "articulation of such needs is a crucial component of coherence, since clear signals are necessary for institutions and individuals to respond appropriately" (p. 22, as well as pp. 17, 39, 52; see also Ontario Ministry of Education, 1984, pp. 16–18, 29–32). John Farrell (1990) is more confident, stating that "industry knows what practical and academic skills will be needed for current and future occupations" (p. 28).

In their critique of everyday life, those speaking on behalf of corporate and state interests (including academics) not only want to determine which skills or talents are of most worth, but how, ideologically, old knowledge and old customs, which are actually workers' self-expressions in labour, will be replaced. Wirth claims that computer technology has brought about the need for a new type of thinking, symbolic analysis. This is different, he says, from what he calls the "action-centred skills" common to industrial workers. Metalworkers, for example, have in the past relied on the colour of a flame or of a piece of steel to determine temperature. To Wirth, this is merely an "old physical response" to be replaced by symbolic analysis. He apparently does not accept that the sense of sight, touch, or smell is, in fact, a base for cognitive action. Wirth (1991) seems ready to throw out a form of cognition rooted in pre-industrial labour for the ideological magic of computer technology and its print-outs (pp. 58–59), a critique of work lore that undermines a relatively autonomous comprehension of aspects of the world over which working people have some control.

Consider another example of a new work/knowledge complex, one in which high school students participate regularly through school/work programs. Once limited to tallying the bill, taking money, and making change, the clerk in the computerized grocery store is now involved, Wirth (1991) says, in inventory control, decisions about ordering stock, and related matters. The web of electronic relations has surpassed the old division of labour, creating a workplace in which the computer mediates a functional equality of personnel (pp. 56–58). This is an ideological fantasy. The grocery clerk is "involved" in high-tech work relations only because he or she moves a package with a bar code across an infra-red light, signalling the computer to begin a process that results at some point in a programmed decision to order another carton of wheat flakes. Wirth's position is that systems work when all components are recognized as having system-value. This is the same rationale offered in the education documents for adjusting to globalization, that self-driving interdependence of economies wherein each nation has a functional role in maintaining the system (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1984, p. 9).

Thus, even what the market has previously required of workers' knowledge is overtaken by the claims of a future workplace in which the criticism of workers' talents and capacities is legitimized by the rapidity of changing demands. The reification of knowledge as computer/electronic information is merely a recent expression of the contest over control of knowledge in the workplace (see

Braverman, 1974; Burawoy, 1985; Palmer, 1992). It has been and remains an attempt by dominant forces in society to appropriate the means working people use to fulfil a necessary need—to work in order to reproduce everyday life.

There is little in this futures discourse that remotely approximates a critical approach to education and work. Educational futurists have speculated on the needs of dominant institutions generating change, paying little or no attention to those affected by it. Curricula designed to lead to a questioning and critical appropriation of the world are absent (see Simon, Dippo, & Schenke, 1991).

*Time and Generational Succession*

Understanding the re-organization of the conceptual or practical dimensions of time is essential for comprehending the depth of the bourgeois critique of everyday life. Heller's (1978) category of time is of particular use here. She says that the rhythm of time "serves to express the tempo of development of the *whole* society" (p. 186), through the more particular rhythm of events: birth, death, schooling, work, retirement, and so on. Continuity of time, and the consciousness of it, are implicit in the transfer of knowledge between generations. There is an expectation in everyday life that the flow of knowledge over time draws into its movement a new generation, whose members must be conscious of this continuity and *desire* to be drawn into it, particularly in the case of work. Consciousness of the continuity of time is necessary for "comprehending *humanity's road to the present* . . . as a *temporal process*" (p. 182).

The rhythm of time is undermined in the speculations of educational futurists. The obsession with self-driven technological change works against generational continuity as a necessary need. At the level of everyday life, the future is about this kind of continuity. Our culture is sustained, in part, by our tendency to think and act toward the future; it is an aspect of the teleological orientation of our species-being (Lukacs, 1978, 1980; Marx, 1977). In the twentieth century, working people particularly have anticipated the future as a time of comparative security, of a leisure built on that security, but which is possible only after work, raising children and accumulating material goods *over a long period of time*. During these efforts, persons become increasingly conscious of the *time* they are going through and toward, attempting to establish a pattern that will "guarantee" their future as well as lay the groundwork for generational continuity. The patterns vary among persons in disparate social positions. Appropriate to the current argument, Lynd (1939/1964) discussed "the hope of sending the children to college" (p. 92)—a means of reproducing generations and *making the future better.*

> With this exception, if one represents the future as it feels psychologically to the businessman as a prolonged line sloping upward, it is probably safe to depict the sense of the future of a growing mass of workingmen as a horizontal line with incidental waves

of recurrent good times. . . . The predominant time-focus in one case is relatively long . . . in the other, short, from week to week or month to month. (pp. 92–93)

Educational futurists have implicitly accepted this distinction in time (represented, in part, by the 70:30 split in education after high school), and rest the legitimacy of their proposals on a significant proportion of the population adapting to this difference in experience and expectation.

In practical terms, the educational documents emphasize that schooling will be increasingly concerned with preparing young people for a disjointed timeframe of work and other life activities, for the discontinuity of events that will shape their lives. Flexible specialization and preparation for it in schooling requires that time be understood as an integrated temporal/spatial concept — as *punctuality.* This is an aspect of "knowing the times" and provokes such questions as, "At what time-juncture in the progress of technology will I be required learn another, different fragmentary skill, and to what other work space must I shift in order to live temporarily by this fragment?" Knowing the times in this context means understanding the rhythm and pattern of technological change for the sake of one's own fit into the system of production. The rhythms of work life, the expectations of continuity (i.e., security) are revealed in educational futures to be the instrumental linkage between the temporal and spatial relations of schooling and those of production. The "just-in-time work force" exemplifies the corporate sector's power to reconstitute work as temporary, at base, located in the most instrumental time/space contexts of production and social life. What it is like to adapt to these conditions has been sensitively discussed by Burman and his unemployed subjects (1988, pp. 139–164).

*Alienation and Fragmentation*

Alienation occurs when people struggle between socially constructed needs and natural/necessary needs. Work is a necessary need; consumption beyond a certain level is a socially constructed need. But more importantly, a future of change in the direction these documents assume, and in which work-knowledge is continually diminished, is claimed as a "need" for national survival (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1984, p. 83). Proposed curriculum changes serve the needs of the business sector in opposition to the necessary needs of those to whom their documents are directed.

From the point of view of sociologists and philosophers of everyday life, labour is an act of self-expression and self-preservation, and not, in itself, in any necessary relationship to alienation (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 38; Lukacs, 1978, 1980; Marx, 1977, pp. 66–75). But alienation is, from Lefebvre's (1991) critical perspective, the "driving force behind the critique of everyday life" (p. 76). For if everyday life is concerned with the reproduction of individuals, they must attempt this within such categories as work, knowledge, and the succession of

generations. In the category of work alone, social reproduction is carried out in terms of its structured spatial, temporal, and human relations. In the future, more than now or in the past, it seems, these relations will constitute the terrain of conflict over everyday life, for here more than elsewhere the fragmentation process of industrialism continues hard at work. The subordination of work-life to technological change, fluctuations in economic conditions, and competition between core and peripheral groups of workers will become sources of alienation.

The argument here is not that societies must be stable to protect vulnerable working people, for the history of industrial labour shows that workers themselves have generated much social change and established new conditions for security. Nor is the issue simply one of the production and control of knowledge. Rather, it is that through the categories of thought and action noted above persons live and *expect* to live. Further, it is the control over and influence within these categories that is further stripped away in the futures discourse.

If work is self-expression, then the continued fragmentation of this means of expression will lend persons an increasingly dismembered identity — historically, a generalized effect of industrial labour. The bourgeois critique of everyday life through educational futures continues and intensifies this fragmentation by specifically attacking these fundamental categories of human development and maintenance. Knowledge or skill, education or training are not the starting point of these educational futures or of new production programs. Rather, their primary orientation is temporariness, redundancy in skill, obsolescence in the production process, the absence as much as the presence of knowledge, and competition between spatially related groups. These constitute a reinvigorated attack on the familiar, on normative expectations of personal as well as social security. Not surprisingly, alienation is also appropriated as a normal (i.e., expected) part of knowing our culture. It is recognized that change, whether social or individual, can affect persons' development and self-image. In social studies texts, the negativity of alienation has been reconciled with technological change (Irving, Deering, Gerrard, & Sheahan, 1988, pp. 258–261; Sproule, 1988, pp. 326–331).

Educational futurists seem to have three lines of defense. One is their empirically based rationale that change is occurring, that it is legitimate because it is fact. Technological or other forms of change are, however, socially constructed through conscious human agency. Thus, the changes they anticipate can be linked to particular interests. The second line of defense is the offer of "life-long learning" as an antidote to redundancy. Fundamental to all the educational documents reviewed here, and such work programs as flexible specialization, is the continuous and socially constructed need to learn, not *more*, but *other.* The surpassing of one or another skill or fragment of knowledge, students are warned, is an inescapable condition of the future (ECC, 1992, pp. 16–17, 44–46). But as Livingstone (1993) has shown, life-long learning for poor and working people remains systematically constrained. Although the trend has

changed in some respects it is still the youngest and most educated who participate in continuous education activities, and the oldest and least educated whose labour experience and desire for knowledge is least used.

The third defense of educational futurists is the momentum of their rhetoric: they attempt to legitimize the alienating, destabilizing effects of displacement and the disjointedness of working people's lives, it seems, by impressing upon these people the need to alter their expectations as often as they will be required to change their fragmentary skills and shift from redundancy to employment to redundancy again. This is why *attitude* is so important in these documents — it is the most useful "knowledge" to be acquired in schooling because it maintains the fiction that affirmative individual responses to institutional demands is the key to adaptation and success.

The concept of educational futures has become inextricably linked to the demands of the business sector. As McMurtry (1991) has argued, the production of knowledge for corporations, once a by-product of education, "is now proclaimed as its ultimate goal" (p. 210). For all their attention to the individual, to the subjective component of education, educational futurists have failed to account for the consequences of this connection and the outcome of subverting certain necessary human needs.

NOTES

[1] I thank the three anonymous reviewers, and, especially, David Livingstone for their critical comments and suggestions.

[2] I use "documents" as a generic term in this article to refer to these publications.

[3] From a different perspective, but of similar import, A. Giddens (1991) has stressed the significance of routine as a starting point of self-identification.

[4] It is also important to note that beyond any empirical trend to shift away from industrial labour in North America is the shift of industrial capacity, and therefore industrial labour, to less developed regions. This is not evidence of a coming post-industrial society through technological change so much as it is a continuation of capital's historic and global search for less restrictive environments and cheaper labour.

[5] A critical survey of this document and others which accompanied it in Saskatchewan can be found in Regnier (1987).

[6] In this regard, among key statements and proposals are those of the Corporate-Higher Education Forum (1990) and Bloom (1990, 1991).

[7] It must be acknowledged that in using the concept of familiarity we risk reifying some social relations and practices. The "familiar is not necessarily the known" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 15); its categories are social relations and social roles which may be dominant but also ordinary and uncritical. It is on this basis, however, that a critical knowledge of existing relations — one's place in the world — and alternatives, may be acquired. Some categories of work, education, and experience will illustrate the effect of this critique.

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